778 Some boli are individual, sometimes inherited from an ancestor
782 and consecrated to their owner whose strength they maintain. Others are collective and consecrated to supernatural powers which protect the life of the community.

778 The taboos relating to beings whose soul "impregnates" the boli
782 and to the elements which compose them are decreed at the time /94/
784 of their making. They must be scrupulously respected by those responsible and by those officiating. The boli are generally placed in a sheltered spot either in sanctuaries or in an isolated room of the house, which no one enters without the permission of those responsible. This is done in order to avoid the dangers resulting from broken taboos which would affect the integrity of the boli as well as that of its owners. The handling of the boli, dangerous as it is, is restricted to priests, to the head of the family, or to the owner.

782 Victims most commonly offered on all altars are domestic animals such as fowl, cattle, sheep, and goats. However, on the altars of hunters and those of the uncircumcised, only wild animals are immolated.

The color of the victim is determined by the quality of the being to which it is consecrated as well as by the altar itself. Animals of
[822] a red color are generally killed on the boli of religious societies, thereby increasing the nyama which they contain. White, the symbol of light and purity, is reserved for Faro.

782 The death of the victim is used as an occasion for divination.
787 The throat is cut in such a way as to prolong the death struggle so that the officiating person may interpret the position of the body. The cutting process is followed by eating which has the function of communion. Furthermore, certain parts of the body (the liver) are left on the altar; others such as the jawbone, feathers, and hair are kept as tokens by the person offering the sacrifice.

782 The ritual is usually accompanied by offerings of boiled millet as "refreshment," since the blood is given to the altar as a nourishment. Kola nuts, chosen for their shape and color, are divided into two portions: the officiating person chews one half and spits it out onto the altar before eating the other half.

In former times, human sacrifice was also practiced. These took place in serious cases involving the kingdom, the king, or the chiefs. The usual victim was the albino.

291 rests upon the knowledge of the symbolism of colors, drawings, and
773 numbers. The bands are numerous and each one represents one aspect
531 of metaphysics, one fragment of the myth. Thus, the story of Mousso Koront is told in four successive bands (Pl. III, from 5 to 8). The wearing of the bands depends upon the physical or moral state of the wearer; upon his functions and activities (1).

> 1. We give below the description of a certain number of these bands, chosen from the ones most representative; we intend to publish a complete study of this aspect of a technique most revealing of Sudanese psychology.

291 The white band, finin muku dye, represents Faro, being as white
773 and luminous as the sky and the rays of the sun. White denotes wis-
531 dom and purity of the spirit, the purity of blood. The one who ap-
322 pears in public thus dressed is respected because he affirms thereby his desire to follow religious rules. It is also the color of offerings made to the spirit. A piece of white cloth is sometimes hung over the door of a home where people have just /109/ made a sacrifice. A sick man throws three white bands into the river, or gives them to a person poorer than himself. A white cloth, worn over a man's shoulder, "strengthens his nerves and articulations." At nightfall every evening, all the children put on a tunic of this color. Thus, despite the darkness, they are "in Faro's light" and will recognize each other in times to come as the children of one father, one family, one blood. The marriage veil is made up of eleven bands each measuring eleven cubits; these are not sewn together but rather basted in spirals. Thus dressed, the woman goes in the night to her future husband's village, in the luminous word of Faro and surrounded by the twenty-two elements of creation, the eleven spirals intersecting each other on the right and left. A dead person is also dressed in white: trousers with six strips representing man and his dya, and a hat with three bands. He is rolled up in a blanket of the same color and visitors place upon the corpse pieces of white cloth or cowrie shells. The whole signifies good will, sincerity, and devotion toward Faro of the deceased who must be "white under the earth" if he has not broken any taboos.

The opposite of white is indigo, konofi, which symbolizes darkness and impurity and which is worn in most cases where the spirit's

activity is not involved. Nevertheless, a woman puts on an indigo loincloth the day she resumes sexual relations with her husband after the end of her menses; she retains it until pregnancy. When she is sure of her condition, she puts the loincloth in the sun to purify it and will place the newborn child in it to remind him later that he owes his life to his parents. A dead person who has broken a taboo is buried in an indigo shroud, the only reminder of light being a white cotton thread which is placed on the corpse as an expression of apology and forgiveness. Since indigo is taboo in most of Faro's sacred places, no one wears it during sacrifices or religious ceremonies.

White and indigo complement each other. To twist a white and an indigo thread together to make a string used for holding an amulet is to "roll together happiness and unhappiness, as in life."

The dye wolo is the color of yellow copper. It is in this color that the newly circumcised are dressed after the operation and until they are healed. Red, mbegu, is the color of copper and of blood. Hunters who wear a tunic of mbegu are "covered with a garment of blood." The band kayo (Pl. III, a, 1), in which are found these two colors, indigo and white, reproduces the rainbow: the white intervals are symbols of the word and of purity. /110/ A person making a sacrifice sews a piece of this band on his clothing to indicate that he is circumcised, that he is a hunter, and that he is truthful in his actions and words. A band is hung at the gate of the northern entry to the village in order to protect its inhabitants from dangers coming from outside. A man wears it when he has been ill or has suffered serious financial or family difficulties. On the altars, on the doorways, the colors are represented by millet mash, blood, and kola nut extract. As the rainbow keeps away the rain and dries up water, the kayo strip may not be worn near the river or during sexual intercourse, for it is Faro's taboo.

The band sirakele (literally, a road) (Pl. III, a, 2) represents Faro's descent from the seventh part of the sky down to the seventh part of the earth, the indigo stripe being the dyi fi, "black water," the spirit's earth seat. When put on the loincloth of a married woman, it expresses her rectitude and the good behavior she intends to maintain towards her husband. When worn by a traveler, it prevents him from losing his way.

The buguni (1) (Pl. III, a, 3) is "the sun ray Faro gave to Pemba

1. The word designates the band's place of origin, Bougouni.

291 for his great earthly labors." When clouds form, it is said that Faro
773 "is showing the buguni in the sky" and the diviners advise each person
821 to wear a strip in homage to the spirit and to facilitate the coming of
531 rain. The geomaneer gently rubs the earth, where he is going to draw signs, with a cloth of this design. It is as though he has injected sun, light, and truth into the work he must execute on the impure soil.

291 This band is also called kolõso mako, "necessity of the mixture, "
773 or kami, guinea hen, whose plumage as well as whose fragility the band betokens. In this respect, the buguni symbolizes man's weakness and incompleteness. When placed on a convalescent's clothing, [155] it signifies that the latter has lost some of his vitality during his illness. Dressed in this fashion, he goes to the Niger and bathes so that Faro might heal him. A man who has suffered severe financial losses also wears the buguni. At the market, in public meetings, he will not be made to pay his share of beer because of the band's silent language which is clearer than words. If a widower remarries, he sews a piece of it on his cap in memory of his first wife. The knife of the person offering a sacrifice is wrapped in the buguni, for it "never has enough blood, " also in certain boli which continually crave it.

/111/ In conclusion, the squares of indigo cloth represent the void and darkness; the white ones, fulfillment and light. To wear the buguni signifies hope, the impure or weak man hoping to become pure, strong, and fulfilled.

The bugunimba (literally, large buguni) or nyedẽ (literally, threads of the eye) has the same symbolism. A wound is bandaged with it. A man who has broken a taboo wears a cap of this material; an illegitimate child also wears it. The buguni tyekorole which symbolizes the impurity of Mousso Koroni is used to implore Faro's help in great calamities and for misfortunes without remedy. Thus, the body of a stillborn child is covered with it.

291 The buguni nyama (Pl. III, a, 4), made of twenty-two alternating
773 indigo and white squares, symbolizes creation in its harmonious and
822 orderly entirety. Its separation into two layers recalls the duality of
801 nature, represented by a thin stripe through the middle. A happy man sews an entire strip into his tunic. The man who has difficulties of any kind divides it lengthwise and pins a small piece at the bottom of his garment.

291 The nyeba, "big eye," or koloso tyema, "mixed masculinity"
773 (with femininity), (Pl. III, a, 11) also represents creation, here sym-
822 bolized by the double layer of five indigo and white bands (1). At
801

1. On the value of number 5, see pp. 24, 25.

the same time the cloth also symbolizes the complete man, said to be both masculine and feminine. A newborn child, but never an illegitimate one, is clothed in it.

291 The band soli (Pl. III, a, 5) represents the good conduct of Mousso
773 Koroni at the beginning of her life as well as her betrayal which brought disorder on earth.

531 In olden times, people who had committed bad deeds were obliged
[764] to wear it. Today it is used as the shroud for a child who dies immediately after birth; a strip is sewn to the garment of a recently excised girl or to the loincloth of a woman insured in childbirth. When differences or conflicts arise within a family, a fragment is placed in amulets which the women must then wear.

[828] The wutu nyekorotike (Pl. III, a, 6) pictures the disorderly voyage of Mousso Koroni, her despair and her madness. This pattern is reserved for insane people in order to warn others of their condition.

The band gombo (Pl. III, a, 7) recalls the pursuit of Mousso /112/ Koroni by the god Pemba into the depths of the sky and the earth.

The band tyatyeli (Pl. III, a, 8) a picture of Mousso Koroni's defeat, symbolizes human work. It is given to a courageous and energetic woman. It is circulated among those present at religious ceremonies and its mere presence indicates that nothing here below is obtained without work and that all stems from work. To wear this band strengthens the man who is entering upon a task in a village other than his own.

The band saki is the koblenkaba, "red sky." It symbolizes heat, anger, difficulties, and sorrows. It is woven at the time of marriage negotiations for the purpose of resolving any differences of opinion.
[844] A piece of it is dipped into the blood after birth and then thrown away in order to purify everything.

[822] The blue stripes of dyitala represent impurity, and the red stripes, purification by sacrifice. Whoever has broken a taboo wears the blue, and the red when he is purified. A piece of red cloth may be inserted into the vagina of a young woman, after she has lost her virginity or

194 The ancestors are worshipped in various places: at the doors and
769 thresholds of houses, at the cemetery, and at stone altars placed at
778 the intersections of lanes and in public squares. These positive cults, which are aimed at the acquisition of beneficial forces, have as a counterpart, cults in which the villagers rid themselves of all their unlucky and infectious elements; these take place, in particular, at the corssroads, dangu, which are placed under the guardianship of the earth Soba spirits.

It would be impossible to treat all of the cults of the Bambara villages. Among these, three have caught our attention; they concern the dasiri, the dangu, and the ancestral altar stones.

A. The dasiri

194 The word dasiri (literally, which binds the mouth) designates the
776 invisible spirit, Faro's representative entrusted with watching over
778 /138/ the village, as well as the seat of this spirit and, sometimes too, the animal which accompanies it or symbolizes it.

The spirit haunts a rock, a thicket, or a tree situated near the village; the approaches to this spot are reserved for the elder in charge of the ritual (1).

[824] 1. In Massala and Soroba it is a baobab tree; in Sama, a tamarind tree, etc. See the observations on the dasiri collected by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné /Monograph of Djenne/, pp. 137-138; L. Tauxier. La Religion Bambara, pp. 195-208.

[187 361] Generally the place is pointed out by the geomancer at the time the village is founded, or else determined by an event which occurred at that time. It is after this operation that the buildings are erected to the west of the chosen spot.

If the dasiri is a tree, no one may burn or cut its branches. In
● [822] many cases it cannot be approached by anyone dressed in black or indigo, colors which represent obscurity. No Peul may sit in its
[563] shade (2). Any infraction of these taboos brings about the death of

2. The reasons for the taboo concerning the Peul have not yet been ascertained.

The Ceble or Ndomo

794 Like their circumcised and adult elders, all the uncircumcised and nonexcised members of a village form a society, called ceble (literally, red man) or ndomo (literally, gathering), whose members are called ndomo dew, sons of the ndomo, or also ndomo ngow. The society of the ndomo is older than that of the Komo (1). Formerly it brought

1. It is said: ndomo ka koro komo ye, "the ndomo is older than the komo." Certain aspects of the ndomo have been described by Ch. Monteil, Monographie de Djenné, p. 15, and L. Tauxier, La Religion bambara, p. 380 ff.

together a great number of adolescents since circumcision was performed much later. Nowadays, since children are operated upon very young, its importance has diminished, but as it contains the power of the uncircumcised it still plays an important role which is expressed even in its name. Red is a symbol of power and energy; it is also the sign of the sacrifice. [822]

The ndomo is directed by a chief assisted by a person who performs the sacrifices, murukalatigi (literally, master of the knife handle) and by an organizer of ceremonies, the dyolokotigi (literally, master of the chain).

It is in the course of agricultural work communally performed that the /171/ most energetic member is name chief; he is the one who has best and most rapidly fulfilled his task and who has, in addition, caused the adversaries who have been presented to touch the ground three times. The chief, who is responsible for the altars of the ndomo, sees to the instruction of the initiates, regulates their competitions, nominates the bearer of the mask and the one who is charged with the maintenance of ritual objects. Finally, he officiates during the collective ceremonies. The murukalatigi cuts the throats of the victims; he cuts out and makes the masks and other ritual objects. The dyolokotigi directs the ceremonies and makes decisions about the members' advancement.

The hierarchy is composed of five grades corresponding to the five fundamental altars. Each grade is passed annually after special

*173 Mamari was soon charmed by the wide-awake countenance and quick intelligence of Ngolo and made him a boon companion and sharer of all his secrets. He gave him the key to the room where his idols were kept and taught him the rituals of their cult. He presented him to his wives, dressed him in red (1) and, in

[822]

1. Scarlet is a favorite color among the Sudanese. The tale here recounted shows three examples of this fact: the foregoing about Ngolo, another about Tonmassa, and still another about Deni-ba Bo. The last two examples would seem to indicate that red was especially reserved for chiefs. A similar conclusion is to be reached from analogous facts at Malli set forth by Ibn Batouta.

short, treated him as the most cherished of favorites.

A year passed before the people of Nyouanna put in an appearance; Mamari asked them if they wanted to claim the child. "No," they said, "for not only has the time-limit passed, but also we still have not the means to pay the tax agreed; when he accepted your proposal, Mênkoro knew perfectly well that he could never carry it out. Besides, the child has by now acquired habits from living among you which would make it unbearable for him to live with us." Mamari ordered the blacksmith to inform everyone of these statements so that it would be well known that Ngolo Dyara was now his slave both in fact and by law.

By dint of living so intimately with his master, Ngolo soon learned all Mamari's secrets. He knew, for instance, that on certain days Mamari bathed in water which had the virtue of strengthening and increasing his authority. It occurred to him that he could no doubt acquire a bit of this power if he bathed in the magic water. So every time the master took a bath, the child stood beneath the gutter that carried the water outside so as to share the wonderful effects of this magic practice. [46] But Mamari had noticed traces of footprints beneath the gutter on

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831 the peasant digs with the male hoe and covers with the female hoe; the work done with the female double of the peasant and the male double of the wife symbolizes the sexual union. (1)

1. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, "L'agriculture des Bozo," [Bozo Agriculture] Journal des Africanistes [Ed., Journal de la Société des Africanistes, 1949.]

d. Basketry

285 Basketry is done by everyone, men and women; it plays a large part in the construction and furnishing of the house. Sometimes the lofts are immense baskets, woven on the diagonal. In certain regions a great mat is wrapped around the exterior wall of the round hut. The doors of mud huts are often coarse mats woven diagonally [531] which are placed before the opening. But much finer mats, made from fibers of different colors and with geometric designs with a symbolic meaning, cover the ground for sitting or sleeping.

e. Weaving, Clothes, Ornaments

291 The first article of clothing was the fiber skirt made from the [824] nyama (Bauhinia reticulata, or Bauhinia thonningii) and the covering for the sexual parts which are still worn during religious ceremonies.

[773] Mythology designates cotton as the first fiber to be woven.

286 Weaving is one of the most widespread techniques. Cotton, spun by the women, is woven by the men, in olden times by the captives, who work in the open air near the huts, in the shade of trees in the courtyards or in the public places. A primitive loom made of four vertical wooden parts connected by horizontal shafts and driven by pedals weaves long bands. The warp and woof form a ground stich and symbolize a being of intelligence and eloquence. Moreover, a science of the bands exists which is based on the symbolism of colors, designs, and numbers.

822 The Bambara distinguish three fundamental colors: white, red, and black. Each of these three tints has its history and its role

822 in the rites. "Red is the color of the middle regions of the world. It characterizes dry heat; it is the color of anger and of justice, that of the king, center of the kingdom." Black or indigo (2) is

2. Zahan, Les couleurs chez les Bambara du Soudan français [Colors Among the Bambara of the French Sudan], Notes Africaines, 1951.

identified with the North and the [98] rainy season. It evokes impurity, obscurity. It denotes sadness and the end of labor. The South accords with the ancestors and the color white which represents light and purity; it is the color of Faro. The whole system
286 of bands woven from different colored threads according to various
822 designs translates the different conditions of the wearer, for each band has its own history, its definite use, and its cosmogonic correspondences. The study of this was begun by G. Dieterlen in Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion] and is being
291 pursued at the present time. Today the form of clothing varies according to the age and sex of the wearer. Young children are nude, with the loins girt with a cotton string or with a belt of blue beads or cowry shells. Sometimes, two small copper bells attract the protection of Faro by their sound. Up until their marriage, the young girls wear a loincloth passed between their legs and held in place by eight bead belts. When they are married, women wear the loincloth open, attached at the waist, and a cotton handkerchief covers
[854] their hair. When a child is born, another cloth knotted at the chest
[554] holds the infant astraddle on the mother's back A chief's wife wore a piece of material made of seven bands which she threw over her shoulder. Very young boys wear short drawers whose form varies with the age classes. Later they are dressed in a short tunic with a neck opening cut out and fitted sleeves, and in ample short breeches
[801] formed of three bands (the masculine number), passing between the legs and three bands on each side covering the thighs. The waist is also encircled by four times three bands, numbers of femininity and of masculinity. Over their clothes, men and women wear a large cloak with an opening cut out in the middle for the head and whose ends are sown together, leaving large openings on each side. These cloaks have a large pocket in front and are embroidered with symbolic

776 They are the necessary intermediaries between man and the Divinity, and since each has absolute authority in its sphere. The black man must appeal to them first of all in all his needs. Consequently, these spirits have assumed a dominant place in the Negro mind to the detriment of God.

776 829 Every djiné can appear in human form, and when it does so it wears a white skin and his appearance does not differ from that of a European. Many a time I have heard women, young girls, and children whisper behind me: "A gné dé djémé wala-wala déren! a boloou be iko djiniou ta tjoko, ne bi siran, He has white eyeballs! his arms are like those of the genii, I am afraid...." This seems strange and leads one to think that this concept developed after the arrival of white men whom, not without reason, they regard as being superior to them in every way. However, I believe that it antedates our arrival. The old Bambara who told me that Mage and Quintin, held prisoners at Segou by King Amadou (أحمدو) until the death of his father, Omar el Hadj (1), were regarded by them as djiné seemed to

1. El-Hadj-Omar, or Omar the Pilgrim, so called because he saw Mecca, was at Ségou around 1835, 1837, or 1839, sometime before the death of Tjéyolo, which occurred around 1839. See Introduction /not translated/.

me sincere, for an old legend states that during in /32/ one of their migrations the Bambara skirted a country inhabited by white men who resembled genii in every way. I might also add that white is the [822] liturgical color in formal sacrifices to the djiné; hens, goats, sheep, even kola nuts -- short of the impossible -- are white in color, undoubtedly because of the people's notion of the color of genii. When traveling Europeans ask their hospitality, they do everything possible to find a white hen to offer them; they believe that this is the way they can most honor their guests because of the color of the latter's skin. The old men think also that we French have intimate

776 contact with the genii and know their family names, or diamou; however little they may be at ease with a Frenchman they will beg him 829 to show them the place where a well should be dug, convinced that we know where live the spirits who are appointed to watch over water. Do we not bear them a certain resemblance?

776 The gnâ, or boli, also are sexed; they reproduce and found families. They are superior to the genii in power and wickedness, and, except indirectly, capable only of evil. They are at open war with God who, without taking away any of their intelligence or liberty, has condemned them tosuffer and to undergo the punishment of fire. They continually set up ambushes against the djiné to make their plans, good or evil, miscarry; they take pleasure in tormenting men, and the Bambara fears them greatly. The worship of the djiné is nothing compared to what is accorded them. Those considered most powerful have an entire retinue to serve them and to render them [651] honors and, as will be seen later, the head tax of 3.50 francs per head is nothing compared to the sums the Blacks spend to ward off the blows of the boli and avoid their wrath.

Like the djiné, the boli appears in human form, but it is disgusting and hideous to behold. All those upon whom the favor of an appearance is bestowed are frozen with terror; the body of the boli is terrifyingly black, and its face disappears in a flame above which rise horns.

In the sacrifices to the boli the liturgical colors are black and [782 red, and a white victim is never offered except in an indirect sacri- 822] fice necessitated by an offering called saraka, which is quite rare. /33/

2. Sorcery and Priesthood

152 Surrounded by spirits, by genii always seeking to harm him, a Bambara is quick to believe that he is the victim of one. This attitude contributes more than a little to give him a certain endurance manifested in the face of suffering. I would even say that he usually bears suffering, not with stoicism but with the torpor of an animal.

776 do not disdain to frolic in the bottom of a well or pond and keep cool there. These last are put in charge of the elements in a very special way. Although endowed /89/ with a divine virtue, they are still far from gods and are only intermediaries between human beings and the Divinity. This last idea seems to be in the background, almost disappearing, and yet, if one has the patience to listen to the old men and let them express themselves, one quickly sees that they still have it, even though ill defined and very confused, and one can believe that in the beginning the worship of the gnéna was a direct worship, offered to the Divinity through their mediation. Men, women, children, everybody takes part in the worship of the gnéna; although there is one, koté (kouéré in Bani), whose mysteries are veiled, its sect is only semioccult, and the entire population takes part in the festivals held in its honor. Barring a formal order from the sorcerers or the 776 impossibility of obtaining items in the liturgical (1) color, everything 822

1. The reason for a failure to conform to the liturgy is always announced before a saraka or a sacrifice.

used in this worship -- victims, kola nuts -- is white, and among the Negroes white is the symbol of innocence and purity.

776 "Primitive peoples admit the existence of superhuman powers," 782 says Nicolay. "When these are supposed to inhabit certain objects in the form of spirits, genii, etc., that is animism." /*/ This

/* Fernand Nicolay, Curiosite's des lois et coutumes - Histoire des croyances, superstitions, moeurs, usages et coutumes (selon le plan du Décalogue) /Curiosities among Laws and Customs. The History of Beliefs, Superstitions, Ways, Practices, and Customs (according to the outline of the Decalogue). Vol. I, prop. 13. Paris: V. Retaux, 1901./

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2. The Negroes' great festival is held at the end of Ramadan. They have a second at the festival of the كَبَشْ sheep. The Moslem masters forced them to observe these two festivals, but the Bambara have not adopted a single Moslem rite. They sacrifice to the dasiri, to some djiné genii, and to the dead.

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The great sacrifice to the dead is made at the end of Ramadan and at the festival of the كَبَشْ sheep. The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, first sacrifices to the b'lon da ba sou (3), those who,

3. Sou, "corpses"; b'lon da ba, "of the great b'lon," the great entry hut giving access to the village.

like themselves, were priests of the dasiri and, in a general way, to all those who had some civil or religious authority in the village. All the members of his council are present at this sacrifice. After the libations of millet flour mixed with water and d'lo, or millet beer, a fine white hen (4) is slaughtered, and sometimes a sheep then, two

●[822]

4. In general sacrifices where the whole population or a whole sect participates, the liturgical color is the primary consideration, and a pullet a day old has as much value as a large rooster. When a victim of the liturgical color cannot be obtained, only water, dégé, and the kola nut are offered.

white kola nuts are offered and, if the sacrifice is accepted, a clump of wool or a few feathers are torn from the victim and stuck onto the